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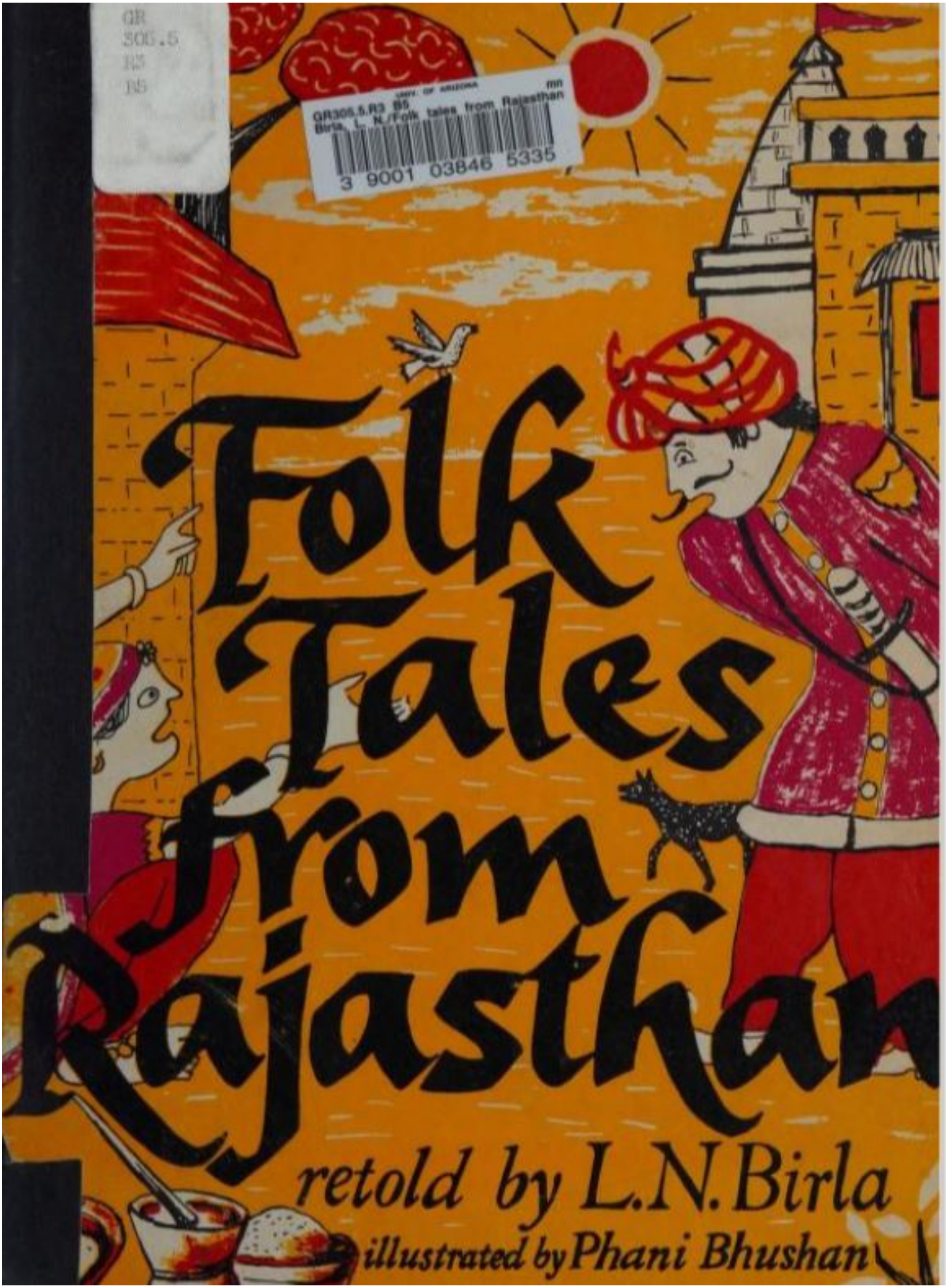

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illustrated by Phani Bhushan

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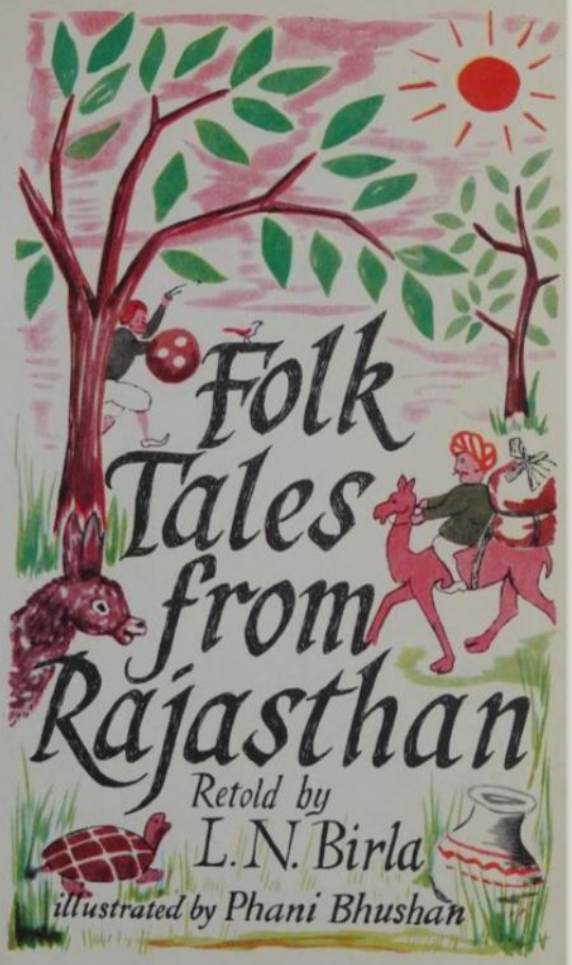

Folk Tales from Rajasthan

Retold by
L. N. Birla

illustrated by Phani Bhushan

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To
MY NIECE JYOTI
who is very fond of such stories

PREFACE

Story telling is an institution all over the world. Usually it is the children who make their mothers and grannies tell them stories. But in Rajasthan even the elders enjoy this pastime, especially on long winter nights when they sit round the glowing hearth. Their minds, weary with good solid facts all the time, are willing to relax for a while. They are awfully happy when they can feel like children and put aside their gravity, even responsibility. And so, like children they also love to be told wonderful tales.

The story-teller imagines impossibilities and the listeners expect the impossible to happen. Both sides have a tacit understanding that the action of the stories takes place in a world where you might make things happen as you want them to. Those who tell as well as those who listen, all are eager to have just the story, no report, no reason.

The stories of old were always light and unlaboured; they sprang from a hearty wish to entertain. They were not the outcome of any pressure of want, or, say, of publishers. They yielded to but one pressure, that of teaching. If they had any aim, they aimed at teaching, and they succeeded. The ancient plays and legends, fairy tales and fables, teach us unawares because the teachers themselves worked unawares. It is a great wonder that they could succeed in this task with their flimsy materials. Not only did they gain influence on listeners of their own time but they continue their sway right up to our own sophisticated times. How could they do this? Because, I suppose, while outwardly the stories were boldly untrue, abiding truth lay at their core.

Rajasthani tales are usually woven round some typical characters. There is the Brahmin, a man of great knowledge and wisdom but not of ready wit. The Rajput is a valiant and brave fighter who sacrifices everything to fulfil a promise or noble purpose. He always adopts a straightforward and true course even though this might adversely affect his interests. The trading class is depicted by the Bania who has a ready wit and is always very watchful in financial matters. The farmer is personified by the Jat, a simple man but with deep commonsense. A Miyan, a Muslim, represents the ruling class of that time. Probably in order to ridicule the ruling class, the Miyan is usually shown as a cheat who tries to show off his cleverness

but is ultimately beaten off by others. The artisan is portrayed as a potter who, though not clever, is lucky enough to come out well. Out of these few types of characters the folk tales are spun out.

In Rajasthan the story-teller is encouraged to go on by the listeners indicating their attention and approval by making a sound something like "Hun Hun" — called hunkarā — a rather half-articulated sound, lest a too distinctly uttered word should distract. A hunkarā is a safe but subdued sound which, by its sweet vagueness, gently drives the narrator onward, giving him an assurance that his narration is being liked and eagerly pursued.

The tale starts with a ritual reciting of a verse of which a translation is given below. Every attempt has been made to preserve the spirit of the orginal:

One tale from another differs in course,
Yet art is one, single the source;
Shears and tridents unlike they appear
But steel is the same; that's quite clear.

Ripples in rivers circle around,
Problems in stories equally abound.
As rivers from sources briskly swing
Dancing in Ghumar whirlpools ring.

Reciters proceed, as listeners say 'hun'
Like drums to army hunkarās they do.
Long live the story and he who tells it.
Long live listeners humming so sweet.

The dim hour when words have a spell,
Half asleep half awake listen to a tale.
God grant men many a good day.
So begins a tale: "Once there was a ....

L. N. Birla

The Wise Banjari

There was once a goatherd who used to look after a herd of goats. All the twenty-four hours he was with the goats, living with them only. He got so accustomed to the habits of goats that even while drinking or eating he would lie on all fours.

It so happened that once a Banjara (peddlar) was passing by with his wife. The Banjara said that it was fate that had made the goatherd like a goat. The Banjari, his wife, said: "I don't think fate has any hand in this matter. He has become like this because of the company which he keeps." The Banjara said that the Banjari was a fool to believe this and that she did not know the ways of the world. The wife said: "If you think so, it is no use my going with you. I will stay here." So she stayed behind.

After the Banjara had left, the Banjari approached the goatherd saying, "Brother, I am your adopted sister." The goatherd said "I get six pieces of bread a day and you can stay with me and share them." The mother of the goatherd came the next day with bread for him and she was pleased to see that he had an adopted sister to help him. The Banjari spent the day with the goatherd and stayed with his mother at night. Thus a few days went past.

In order to change the goatherd's mode of living the Banjari started reducing his diet. First, she cut down the bread from six to four pieces, then from four to three and then one day she took only one piece of bread for him. The goatherd became very weak due to lack of food and could not accompany the goats wherever they went. So she suggested to the goatherd that he should sell the goats now that he was very weak and do something else. He demurred at first but eventually agreed to the proposal.

After the goats were sold off the Banjari started teaching him to read and write. He was also sent to a school and became quite a scholar. She taught him how to sit properly, how to get up properly and to eat properly. In a few years he was fully trained. She then suggested to him that he should now go to the king's court and talk to nobody but the king to whom he should offer his services as a consultant in animal husbandry. The king had so many horses and he could advise the king about their well-being. The goatherd who had by then become a polished gentleman, accepted this advice and went to the court.

At the court he sat aside and did not say a word to anybody. When, however, the king passed before him, the goatherd got up and offered him his services. The king said that his offer was acceptable, provided he passed a test. He would be shown two horses—one was the mother and the other the filly. But the mother and the filly in appearance were absolutely the same. If he could find out which was the mother and which was the daughter he would be given the post. Otherwise he would be driven out of the village and exiled. He said that he was agreeable to these terms and would tell the mother from the daughter the next day.

In the evening he returned home very dejected and narrated all the happenings at the court. The Banjari told him not to worry and said she would show him a way to find out which was the mother and which was the filly. The next morning she suggested to the goatherd that he should request the king not to give any more fodder to the horses during the day. In the evening, he should ask for a big bucketful of water and plenty of fodder to be put in a certain

place. The animals should then be allowed to approach the spot. The king ordered that the goatherd's instructions be carried out.

As evening approached, the sister told the goatherd that, most probably, the filly would come first and start drinking the water. In case the mother came first, she would just dip her mouth in the water and then turn back to see whether the filly had followed her. Thus he would know which was the mother and which was the filly.

In the evening, the goatherd went to the stable and stood near the water bucket. The horses were let free. The mother came first but she dipped her mouth in the water and immediately turned back to see whether the filly had come with her. Immediately the goatherd identified the mother.

When the mare and filly finished drinking the water and eating the fodder, the goatherd approached the king and declared which was the mother and which was the filly. The king was very pleased with him and appointed him his consultant in animal husbandry. He became a rich man and started living in high style in the town.

After a few years the Banjara who had left his wife visited the town again. The Banjari requested the goatherd to invite the Banjara for a meal. The Banjara was duly invited to dinner. After he finished his food he looked attentively at the goatherd, trying to remember where he had seen his face. The goatherd started laughing: "Do you remember this face?" The Banjara said that he remembered having seen him but could not remeber who he was. The goatherd called his adopted sister, and when the Banjara saw his wife, everything was clear to him. He apologised to his wife and begged her pardon. Thereafter the Banjara and his wife went on their way, and the goatherd lived happily as a consultant to the king.

The Clever Brothers

There was once a king who had a very wise minister. It happened that the minister died leaving two sons. Both were as clever and wise as their father. The king thought of making them his ministers. There were, however, others who conspired against them and informed the king that sixty thousand rupees were due from their father. Unless the boys could repay the debt it would be improper to appoint them to so exalted a position said the new minister.

The king sent for the lads and asked them about the debt. The boys knew nothing about it, but said that since the new minister had made this claim they would certainly pay. Meantime they begged for some employment. The minister agreed to give them some work but, being a crafty fellow, he employed one of them as a gatekeeper and the other as a gardener in the king's garden. The two boys received wages which were barely enough to live on. They did not have any money left for payment of the claim.

The brothers, therefore, one day talked over the matter and made up their minds to do something about it. The next day, when the king was passing through the gate, the boy who was a gatekeeper said: "Sire, your court is full of wise men. I shall be grateful if somebody could tell me what is the loftiest thing in this world." The king went to his court and asked this question of all the ministers and sages who had assembled there. Somebody said the hills were the loftiest; somebody said the power of riches was the loftiest thing. Some others said that grain sown in the fields had the loftiest status. But none of these answers satisfied either the king or his courtiers, who found some defect in each of them.

The king was nonplussed. Forgetting that the gatekeeper was the son of his old Chief Minister, he called the gatekeeper and told him to find a man who could reply to his question. The gatekeeper said, "Sire, the only man who may, perhaps, be able to reply to my question is your gardener." The king at once sent for the gardener. The gardener, when he was called to the king's presence and asked the question, replied: "The word of a man is the loftiest thing in this world." This answer satisfied the gatekeeper as well as all those who were present in the court. They all said, "This gardener is a wise man." So the king said: "Ask for a boon." The gardener replied that he would like to have twenty thousand rupees for this answer. The king granted it.

The next day, when the king was again passing through the gate the gatekeeper said: "Sire, you have, of course, answered the question that the word of a man is the loftiest thing in this world, but I would like to know its abode." Again when the king went to the court, he asked this question of all his ministers and the wise men. One man said, the abode of the word was in pandits; another said, it was with honest men; while a third man said, it was with rich men. But again, none of these answers satisfied those present, or the gatekeeper. The gardener therefore was sent for again. This time he asked that he be awarded another twenty thousand rupees before he replied to the question. The king agreed. Then the gardener said: "Sire, the abode of the word is neither the rich men nor the pandits nor the honest men; the abode of the word is men of honour who will never change." The wisdom of the answer was acclaimed by all and satisfied the gatekeeper as well.

The third day when the king passed through the gate he was once again stopped by the gatekeeper. "Sire," he said, "you have replied to two of my questions. You have told me that the loftiest thing is the word of a man and that its abode is in men of honour; but I would like to know what is its food." The king was surprised at this question. However, he enquired from those present in his court. Nobody could reply. So he sent for the gardener and asked him. The gardener said, "Sire, another twenty thousand rupees would suffice to induce me to reply to this question also." The king gave him yet another twenty thousand. The gardener replied: "Sire, the loftiest thing in the world is the word of a man, its abode is in men of honour and it lives on tolerance." This satisfied everybody.

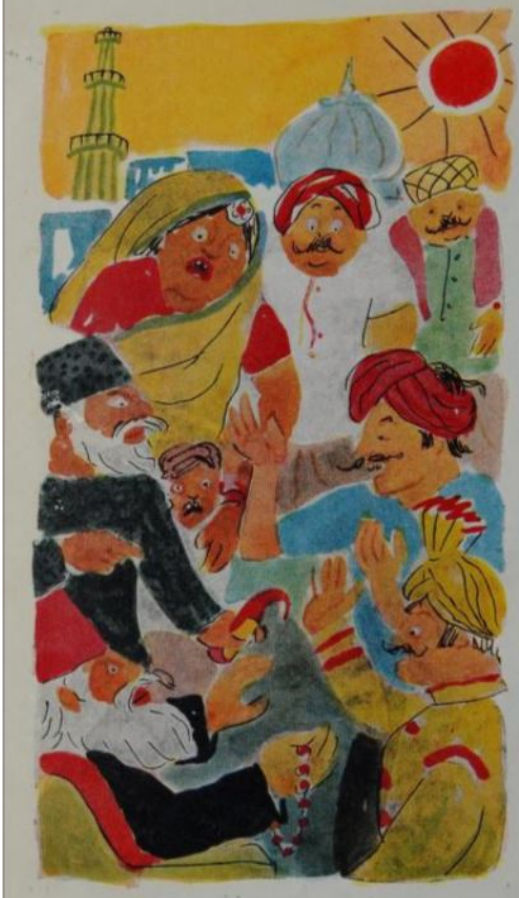
The next day, as the king was passing the gate again, the gatekeeper said: "Sire you have replied to three of my questions: you have told me that the loftiest thing in the world is the word of a man, that

its abode is in men of honour and that it lives on tolerance. But what is its work?" This surprised the king even more. Again he asked his ministers. Nobody could reply. So, the king, as usual, sent for the gardener. When the gardener came he presented sixty thousand rupees to the king and said: "Sire, after the death of our father your minister conspired and falsely saddled us with a debt of sixty thousand rupees. We are paying this amount though we do not owe it. Now our only request is that, before I reply to your question, the culprit should be punished."

The king at once ordered the execution of the minister. Then the gardener replied: "Sire, the loftiest thing in the world is the word of a man, and its abode is in man of honour, it lives on tolerance and it accomplishes such acts as cannot be accomplished either by riches or strength or even wisdom." Everybody present was surprised to hear such an aswer from the mouth of a youngster. And the king was so highly pleased that he appointed both the brothers as his ministers in place of their departed father.

Take a Trip to Delhi

Once a Jat enquired of a Miyan: "Well, friend, how can I see Delhi?" The Miyan replied: "Strike somebody with your shoes, and you will see Delhi." As nobody else was present, the Jat took off his shoes and struck the Miyan twice. The Miyan reported the matter to the police and the police summoned the Jat to present himself before the Kazi at Delhi. The Jat said: "Well, that is fine, just what I wanted," and he left for Delhi.



As he was entering the city, the Jat passed a confectionery shop. He was feeling very hungry. The confectioner had many kinds of sweets and other delicacies in his shop. The Jat pointed to one of them and enquired, "What is this?" The confectioner replied: "Do-Utha".* The Jat thought that he was asking him to pick up and eat two of them. So he picked up two and ate them. Then there was another delicacy to which the Jat pointed, wanting to know what it was. The confectioner said: "Khaja".† The Jat thought the confectioner wanted him to eat that also, so he picked up a few pieces and ate them. Now when the Jat had finished eating, the confectioner wanted the money to be paid. The Jat refused and took the road to the Kazi's court. The confectioner made a complaint to the police and followed the Jat to seek redress from the Kazi.

A woman was passing that way with her son, a very mischievous boy. The woman cried: "Oh stranger, cut the ears of this naughty boy." The Jat took out his knife at once and cut off both the boy's ears. The woman started crying: "This fellow has cut off the ears of my son," and reported the matter to the police. The Jat replied: "Since I am already going to the Kazi, let this woman come also."

Further on his way he saw a pretty girl buying oil in the shop of a Bania. By chance she spilt some of the oil and started crying that her father would get angry with her. The Bania said: "Don't cry. Some of your evil stars have been propitiated by this oil." The Jat thought that it were better to do a good turn to the Bania and propitiate all his evil stars. So he struck the pot of oil with his stick and the oil flowed all round in the shop. The Bania cried out angrily: "This fellow has broken my pot of oil", and reported to the police. The Jat said: "Well, I am going to the Kazi anyway, let the Bania also come there."

Thus the Jat reached the court of the Kazi with a caravan of complainants following him along with the police.

The Kazi first took up the case of the Miyan and asked the Jat why he had struck the Miyan with his shoes. The Jat said: "Sir, I am a simple villager. I asked my friend, the Miyan, how to see Delhi. He said: 'Strike somebody once or twice with your shoes and you will see Delhi.' As I did not find anyone else present, I took advantage of the presence of the Miyan. If that is my mistake, I plead guilty to it." On hearing both sides, the Kazi said that it was the fault of the Miyan.

Then the confectioner came forward and said that the Jat had

* A pun on Do = two, and Utha = pick up.
† A pun on Khaja = eat up.

eaten some of his delicacies but had not paid for them. The Jat said: "My lord, kindly enquire from the confectioner whether he ordered me to eat them or not. First he suggested 'Do-utha' so I picked up only two pieces, not a piece more, and ate them. Then he said 'Khaja'. So I picked up a few pieces from the other plate and ate them. If I made a mistake in carrying out his instructions then I plead guilty. I am a simple man and I thought I should carry out the directions of the confectioner." The Kazi decided that there was no charge against the Jat as the confectioner should have known that he was a simple villager and did not know the names of the different delicacies.

Then came the woman with her son, complaining that the Jat had severed his ears. The Jat replied: "Sir, kindly enquire of the woman whether or not she asked me to cut off the ears of this naughty boy." The woman replied that she was only chiding the boy and that she had had no intention of being taken seriously. The Jat said: "I am a simple villager and I thought she meant what she said." The Kazi therefore dismissed this charge against the Jat also.

The last to complain was the Bania: "Oh, my Lord Kazi, this fellow broke a pot of my oil and put me to a loss of a hundred rupees." The Jat explained what had actually happened. He said that a young girl had purchased oil from the Bania's shop and spilt some oil and started crying. The Bania told her not to cry because that would propitiate some of her evil stars. The Kazi asked the Bania whether he said so to the girl or not. The Bania said: "Yes, I did say this to the girl." So the Jat replied: "Well, Sir, I have done a very good turn to the Bania by propitiating all his evil stars by breaking the pot of oil. Am I at fault?" The Kazi started laughing and dismissed this case also, and the Jat was at large to roam about the city of Delhi.

The Adventurous Rajput

There was once a Rajput by the name of Himatsingh who was very poor. He decided to go and seek his fortune. Accordingly he collected all that he could and found that he had only four takkas (equal to two old Indian pice) with him. He purchased dried parched grams for one takka and started on his long journey with three takkas in his pocket. On the way he met a Bania travelling along the same road and they walked together.

After a few miles, the Rajput asked the Bania why he did not talk so that the time might not hang heavy on them. The Bania said: "My talk would cost money." The Rajput said that he had three takkas, and paid one takka to the Bania. The Bania declared that for the value of one takka he would say that "Two are better than

one while travelling", and fell silent. The Rajput considered this and offered him one more takka. The Bania spoke again: "It pays to be wakeful in a strange place", and again fell silent. The Rajput after considering the second precept paid yet another takka to the Bania. The Bania said: "It pays to keep your sword sharp", and he fell into silence. This had already put the Rajput to the end of his resources and he could do nothing more. In the evening when they reached a village they parted company.

The next day the Rajput was left alone to travel. After a while he remembered the first precept of the Bania and he thought: "Let me pick up company so that I may not be all alone." He noticed a tortoise. He picked it up and travelled for two days with it. But nothing happened to him. So he thought it was useless to carry the tortoise and that the takka paid to the Bania was as good as lost. He decided to leave the tortoise in a pool of water he passed. As he put his feet into the water they touched something hard like metal. He bent down to see what it was and found that it was a vessel. He pulled out the vessel and saw that it contained one hundred gold coins. This made the Rajput very happy and thus his first takka brought him a very good return.

At the next village he spent a few coins and purchased a horse and clothing for himself. He resumed his journey the next day and reached a town in the evening. He decided to stay there and find employment. As it was night he could not find any place to sleep and he went to a potter and asked him if he could stay with him for the night. The potter allowed him to stay in his cottage.

However, when it was getting dark, the potter's wife started weeping. On enquiry the potter explained to the Rajput that the daughter of the King was afflicted by a strange malady and that she was always unconscious. During the night somebody had to keep a watch over her and the sentinel was invariably found dead the next morning. The king had therefore decided that each family should contribute one man by turn each night to act as sentinel. That day it was the turn of the potter's son. He had only one son and his wife was weeping. The Rajput said, "Your son need not go, I will go in his place." The potter said that it was dangerous and entreated him not to take the risk, but the Rajput was adamant and ultimately the potter agreed to let him go.

So the Rajput went to the palace and he was ushered into the room where the King's daughter was lying unconscious. By the side of the bed there was a stool and the Rajput sat down. A genie had afflicted the daughter of the King and she had become unconcious.

This genie used to visit her in the form of a venomous serpent every night and bite anybody sitting by her.

After some time the Rajput began to feel sleepy and he remembered the second precept of the Bania: "It pays to be wakeful in a strange place." So he decided to keep awake. About midnight the genie, as usual, came in the form of a serpent and seeing the Rajput turned towards him to strike. But the Rajput noticed the serpent and suddenly remembered the third precept: "It pays to keep your sword sharp." He took out his sword and struck the serpent twice and cut it into three pieces. The genie, as a consequence, died.

When the Rajput saw the serpent dead, he went to sleep. When it was morning, attendants of the King came and opened the door. The noise woke up the Rajput and everybody was surprised to find him alive. Meantime, lo! the Princess also got up as if she had just wakened from a sound sleep. The messengers ran to the King and the Queen, and both of them hurried to the chamber of the Princess. On enquiry, they heard the whole story from the lips of the Rajput and they were delighted. The King gave the Princess in marriage to the Rajput who became verily their own son. After the death of the King, the Rajput became the King and lived happily ever after with the Princess as his Queen.

Three Precepts

Once in the city of Indrapuri there used to reign a powerful king of great fame. He was very wise and was like a father to his subjects. Everybody was happy under his rule and they all loved him. One day a poor Brahmin approached him in Durbar and presented him with three precepts. He looked at the precepts and asked the Brahmin what he wanted. The Brahmin said that as he had to marry off his daughter he wanted help and a thousand rupees for each of his precepts would satisfy him. The king ordered his minister to pay three thousand rupees to the Brahmin and got the precepts written in a fine hand on paper and had them hung opposite his bed.

That night when the king retired he saw the precepts. The first precept ran: "It behoves a king to be wakeful." So the king decided that he would go to the town and find out who among his subjects were happy and who were unhappy. He accordingly disguised himself and went out. While passing through a lane he heard the wailing of an old woman. He went to her and enquired: "O Mother, what has happened to you and why are you so unhappy?" The old woman said, "Stranger, why do you bother about my wails? Go your own way." The king said, "At least let me know about your troubles and see if I can help you."

The old woman said she was the goddess of the king's fortress and that she had been very happy under him. But now the king had only another week to live. A serpent was going to bite the king on the seventh day and the king would die as a result. That was why she was unhappy. The king went back to his palace and while going to bed he read the second precept of the Brahmin. It said, "It behoves a king to treat his enemy well."

On the seventh day, from the gate of the palace to the door of his bedroom he spread scented flowers and all kinds of sweets on both sides of the passage. At one place a jarful of honey, at another a sweet, scented rice and so on. Round the four legs of his bed he, however, heaped salt and sat on his bed waiting for the serpent to come. The serpent entered the palace and passed over the scented flowers. When it noticed sweets on both sides the serpent started tasting and eating them. By the time it reached the door of the bed-

room it was in a very happy mood. However, having eaten too many sweet things it was hankering after salt. So when it came to the bed and found heaps of salt around the bed it very eagerly started eating the salt. After satisfying its craving it got on to the bedpost and as it reached the top it suddenly stopped. The serpent realised that having eaten the salt of the king it should no longer bite him. So it slithered down again. Thus the king was saved and realised the value of the two precepts of the Brahmin.

The king however had a wicked minister who was conspiring to kill him and usurp the kingdom. One day when the king was ill the minister conspired with the royal physician to administer poison to the king with the medicine so that the king would die. With the help of a few thousand gold coins the physician was readily persuaded. The physician went with the medicine to the king and the king sat up in bed to take the medicine. Just as he was on the point of taking the medicine his eyes fell on the third precept of the Brahmin which said, "It behoves one to give full thought before acting."

While the king was considering the precept the physician thought that the king had suspected his treachery and he became very nervous. So unnerved was he that he threw himself at the feet of the king and begged for mercy. He disclosed the whole plot to the king. The king immediately sent for the minister and administered the medicine to the minister. Thus the wicked minister died. As the three precepts of the Brahmin had saved the life of the king he sent for the Brahmin and made him the minister instead. The king thereafter did many great deeds and lived a long and happy life.

The Thief and the King

Once there was a thief who was so clever that people used to say that he could steal even the kohl from one's eyes. He thought one day that unless he could go to the capital and prove his wits there, he could not earn a name among the thieves. So he started for the capital of the kingdom and on arrival there surveyed the town to see what he could do.

He decided to start with the king's palace. The king had a large number of soldiers guarding his palace all day and night. Nobody could enter the palace without being caught. There was a big bell in the palace which was rung every hour to indicate the time of the day or night.

The thief collected some iron pegs and while the hour of twelve at night was being struck, with each sound of the bell he struck one

peg into the wall of the palace. Thus, without creating a noise he put twelve pegs in the wall and by using the pegs as steps he got into the palace. He entered the treasury and stole an assortment of jewellery.

Next morning, when the theft was detected, the ministers reported it to the king, and the king was very much disturbed and annoyed. He instructed the ministers that double the usual number of soldiers should be detailed to patrol the streets of the town. If anybody was found loitering at night he should be arrested as the thief.

While this declaration was being made in the Durbar, the thief also, disguised as a citizen, was present and he learned every detail of the plan. He also soon found out which twenty-six soldiers had been selected to go round the town. He immediately went home, dressed as a mendicant, and approached the wives of all the twenty-six soldiers. Every wife was eager that her husband alone should catch the thief and get the reward from the king.

One by one, he went to them to read their palms and told each one of them that the night was very auspicious for her and that the thief would come to her house disguised as her husband. But, he added, she must not permit the thief to come inside as, otherwise, he would overpower her. She should close all the doors and throw burning charcoal at him even if she heard the thief calling in the tone of her husband. This would result in the capture of the thief.

All these ladies therefore got ready to receive the thief at night without informing their husbands. Meantime, the husbands went their rounds till it was nearly 4 o'clock in the morning. Though it was still dark, as they did not find anybody about, they all thought that no thief would appear that night and decided to go back home. As they approached their houses the women got suspicious and started acting as directed by the thief.

The result was that the soldiers were burnt and had very great difficulty in persuading their wives that they were actually their husbands and to open the doors to them. As all the husbands were burnt they were rushed to the hospital. The next day, when the king attended the Durbar he was informed of all that had happened. He was very upset and instructed the Commissioner of Police personally to undertake the capture of the thief.

The Commissioner got ready that night and started making a round of the town. When he was passing one of the lanes, the thief came out disguised as a young woman. The Police Commissioner asked "her" who "she" was. The thief replied that "she" was the thief. The Commissioner thought the young woman was joking with

him. So he said: "Stop joking and if you are the thief come with me. I will put you in the stocks." The thief replied that it was alright as far as she was concerned and accompanied the Commissioner to the stocks.

When they approached the stocks the thief said: "How do you really use it? Could you kindly explain to me?" The Commisisoner said: "You might run away while I am showing you." The thief said "I have presented myself before you without your asking. Why should I run away?" The Commissioner agreed to show "her" how to use the stocks and as soon as the Commissioner put his legs and hands into them, the thief locked the stocks and bade the Commissioner goodbye.

It was a cold night and by the time it was daylight the Commissioner was half dead with cold. In the morning when the soldiers started coming out they noticed that the Commissioner was imprisoned in the stocks and they let him out and took him to hospital.

When the king attended the court next day he was informed of all the happenings of the night. He was so perturbed that he decided that he himself would take care of the thief that night. The thief of course was listening to all these things, being again present at the durbar. When it was night the thief disguised himself as a mendicant and went to a corner of the town and sat under a tree with a fire burning before him.

The king started on his rounds and passed the mendicant twice. The third time, as he was passing the mendicant, the king enquired of him whether he had seen a stranger going that way. The mendicant replied that he was busy in meditation and that even if somebody had passed him he would not have noticed him. If the king so desired he could sit with the mendicant and watch if anybody were passing. This struck a note in the mind of the king and he at once decided that the mendicant should change clothes with him and go round the town while the king would sit there and watch for the thief.

After much discussion and two or three refusals, the thief ultimately permitted himself to be persuaded by the king, and they exchanged clothes. The thief at once got on the king's horse, went to the palace and entered the king's bedroom and slept there, while the king, now dressed as a mendicant, waited to catch the thief. Till nearly 4 o'clock in the morning, he saw neither the mendicant returning nor any other stranger or thief passing that way, so he decided to go back to the palace. However, when he reached the gates of the palace, the soldiers thought that, as the king had already returned.

this was the thief who now wanted to enter the palace in disguise. So they caught hold of the king and threw him into the dungeon. The king started shouting but nobody would listen to him.

Next morning, when it was daylight, the soldier guarding the dungeon, recognised the face of the king and started shaking in his shoes. He fell at the king's feet. The king then called all the other soldiers and went to his palace. Meantime the thief who had slept in the palace as the king had disappeared with the first rays of the sun, clad in the king's clothes and on the king's horse.

When the king went to his durbar the next day he was most crestfallen and he declared that if the thief would come forward and present himself before the king he would be pardoned and not only would no action be taken against him, but he would be rewarded for his cleverness. The thief who was there at once presented himself before the king and declared himself to be the culprit. For proof he produced all he had stolen from the palace of the king, together with the robes of the king and his horse. The king awarded him four villages and made him promise to give up stealing in future. The thief lived happily ever after.

The Wishing Sieve

Once there was a poor Brahmin who had no income to fall back on for his living. One day his wife told him that she was left only with a few pieces of bread. Unless he started doing something, the next day he would have to starve. So the Brahmin said: "Let me have a few pieces of bread for my journey and I will go to the capital to try and get some help from the king."

The Brahmini (wife of the Brahmin) made up a small parcel containing four pieces of bread for her husband, and he started next morning. In the evening he reached a spot which was quite far from any village or town. There he sat down under a big banyan tree. He opened the parcel of bread for his evening meal. As he had only four pieces he started thinking aloud whether he should eat one or whether he should eat two or eat three or all the four.

There were four ghosts living in that banyan tree; they thought that the Brahmin meant to eat them. They were terrified. All the four ghosts came down and prostrated themselves before the Brahmin and asked him how they could be of service to him. The Brahmin said that he did not have any income and that, therefore, they must make some arrangement whereby he could live; otherwise he was going to eat all the four of them. The ghosts brought out a wishing sieve and told the Brahmin that when he shook that sieve and wished for something it would fall down from the sieve.

The Brahmin took the sieve and next morning started back for home. Owing to his elation and excited mood he could not travel far. Moreover, before he reached his own village he also wanted to try this sieve. So when in the evening he reached a village which was quite a distance from his own, he requested a Jat to put him up for the night. The Jat readily agreed to put him up but said that he did not have much food to offer. The Brahmin said that that did not matter. He would himself produce something. He asked the Jat to vacate the hut for him so that he could make arrangements for the whole household to eat a substantial meal.

The Jat and his mother both became very curious. They hid themselves behind the door to watch the Brahmin and see what he was doing. The Brahmin once inside the hut, started shaking the sieve and wished all types of sweets and savouries and everything arrived in large plates just as the Brahmin wanted. The Brahmin called the Jat and his mother and all of them had an ample and merry meal.

At night when the Brahmin went to sleep the mother and the son both conspired that they should steal the sieve so that they would not have any problem as far as their food was concerned. Accordingly, the Jat quietly entered the hut and stole the sieve. He bound and gagged the Brahmin and threw him out of his hut.

Next morning, a few passersby saw the poor Brahmin lying there, untied his bonds and released him. The Brahmin instead of going home started back for the banyan tree and by evening he reached it. When it was a little dark he started shouting for the ghosts and the ghosts came down and prostrated themselves before him. The Brahmin told them that their sieve had been of no avail and that it was already stolen. So the ghosts told him that they would give him a stick which would beat anybody under his orders. They would also give him a conchshell which, though it would do nothing but talk big, would serve his purpose.

So the Brahmin said: "That will do", and took the conchshell

and the stick and set out again for the same village where he arrived in the morning. He again asked the Jat to let him stay there that night. The Jat thought that the Brahmin probably had something more and so he and his mother agreed to the Brahmin's request. When it was night the Brahmin went into his hut and asked the conchshell: "O Conchshell, the Jat is a poor man and I want one hundred coins for him. Please produce them." The conchshell replied: "What are you talking about one hundred coins, take two hundred coins," and made a sound as if it were counting the coins. The Jat was very surprised and thought that the conchshell was a better thing than even the sieve. Mother and son conspired to repeat their previous performance. A little later, the Brahmin pretended to be asleep and kept the conchshell near his pillow.

The Jat stealthily went inside and as he laid his hand on the conchshell the Brahmin got up and shouted to the stick to beat the Jat. The stick started beating the Jat and beat him until he was exhausted and prostrated himself at the feet of the Brahmin. "Please withdraw your stick" the Jat begged, "and take back your sieve." The Brahmin got back his sieve and ordered the stick to stop. Next morning he went to his home in the next village and thereafter with the help of the sieve the Brahmin and his wife lived happily.

Idler's Aim

Long ago there was a very powerful king. In those days every court had a few bards to sing of the great deeds of the king. One of them, an old and wise man lived at the court of this king. One evening the bard said that it was better to have an aim in life however ridiculous it might be rather than lead an aimless life. He related the following tale:

Once there was a Jat by the name Teja who was very lazy. He passed his days sleeping and eating, and did no work. While he was young he was provided for by his father. After the death of his father, for some time he was provided for by his brothers. Then he married into a rich family and the father-in-law provided for him for many years. But how long could such things last? Everything has an end.

One fine morning, his wife came and told him, "We have finished whatever we had. You are an aimless and lazy fellow. Everybody has some aim in life but you do not have even a semblance of it. For some time I could sell my ornaments and keep you alive, but this state of affairs must end." Teja was a very lazy fellow and he thought that it would be difficult for him to accept a definite aim and start working. So he decided to follow something which would trouble him the least. He said: "As you want me to have an aim in life, I have decided not to eat any food till I have seen the face of the potter, my neighbour." The wife said: ""Well, even this is better than nothing."

This routine continued for some time. One day, however, as it happened, the potter took his donkey and went out very early to fetch clay for making pots. When Teja got up in the morning, he was surprised to find that the potter was out. He waited for the potter's return, but apparently the potter had gone quite far to fetch the clay. As it was getting late, the Jat decided to follow the potter to the quarry and see his face.

The potter was digging clay. While digging he fell upon a huge hoard of treasure. It so happened that the Jat, as he came towards the spot, saw the face of the potter exactly at the time the hoard was discovered by the potter. From a distance the Jat saw the face of the potter and turned back for his meals. The potter thought that the Jat had seen his gold and would report to the king and that the hoard would be seized by the king.

The potter shouted: "Come back." The Jat replied "Oh well, I have seen you." The potter shouted again, "Come back, come back!" The Jat said that there was no necessity now. The potter insisted. When the Jat saw the potter insisting, he went back to the potter; and lo! there he saw a huge vessel full of gold. The potter agreed to share the gold with the Jat half and half. Thus Teja got rewarded for having an aim in life and thereafter lived happily.

Marriage for a Pice

Once there was a poor old woman who had one son. When the son was grown up he told his mother that he was going to marry so that she would have additional help in the house. The old woman said that she did not have any money: how was it possible for the son to marry. The son said he wanted only one pice for the marriage. He, therefore, took one pice from his mother, purchased some baked gram and went and sat near a river.

There a washerman was washing the clothes of the king. He started eating the baked grams. The son of the washerman who was also there felt hungry and asked his father when he could have something to eat. The father asked how they could go away leaving all the king's clothes there. The old woman's son, though a stranger to the washerman, said: "Uncle, don't be afraid, I will watch your clothes. You go and let the boy have his meal." The washerman asked for his name. He said his name was Bhambulio (Tornado).

The washerman took his son home for his meals. As soon as the washerman left the stranger collected all the clothes and started for

the next village. He passed through fields and there a herdsman was watching the villagers' camels grazing. The stranger brought out his baked gram and started eating. The herdsman felt the pangs of hunger and asked for a handful of gram. The stranger said: "Why do you worry about gram? Go and have your meal. You are my uncle and I will watch your camels." The herdsman inquired what his name was. He said his name was Oontdhani (Camel Owner). So the herdsman went home. The boy selected the best camel, put all the clothes on it and disappeared.

While he was travelling to the next village, he saw an old woman with a young girl. The young girl was dead tired. The stranger said: "Auntie, why are you tiring this delicate girl? Let me help you with my camel." The old woman asked the stranger whether he would take the girl and drop her at the next village. The stranger said that he would gladly oblige. The old woman asked his name and he replied that it was Jamaido (Son-in-law). The girl got on to the camel. The stranger instead of stopping at the next village took the road to his mother and his home.

Meantime, the washerman went back to the river and found that all the clothes had disappeared with the stranger. He hurried back and reported the theft to the police. The police inspector asked him what had happened to the clothes. The washerman said that Tornado took them away. The Inspector said that the washerman was a lunatic. How could one get back the clothes if they had been blown away by a tornado. So he was kicked out of the *thana*.

Next came the herdsman reporting the loss of the camel. The inspector asked him who had taken his camel. The herdsman replied that the camel had been taken away by Camel Owner. The irritated inspector replied: "You are a fool. If the camel owner does not have the right to take back his camel, then who else would have it?" And he gave a thrashing to the herdsman for irritating him.

When the old woman reached the next village she did not find her daughter. She also rushed back and reported the matter to the inspector. She said that her daughter had been kidnapped. The inspector enquired who had kidnapped her daughter to which she replied: "Son-in-law." The inspector laughed and said: "O old woman, your age is telling upon you. There could be no greater joy for a woman than the son-in-law taking away her daughter." The old woman was escorted out.

Meantime, this boy returned to his mother with a wife, a camel and clothes. The old woman was very happy to see her son's wife and all of them lived happily ever after.

The Cheat Outwitted

Once there was a king in the town of Gangashahar who ruled very justly and his subjects were quite happy. The king and the queen, however, were very unhappy because they had no son.

In the town there lived a Jat and a Miyan who were neighbours. The Jat was a farmer and depended for his livelihood on the yield of his farm. The Miyan lived by his wits. He would try to cheat everybody and would not let an occasion pass without trying some trick. His neighbour, the Jat, did not like his neighbour's profession. The Miyan thought that the Jat was a fool and that it would be easy to cheat him also.

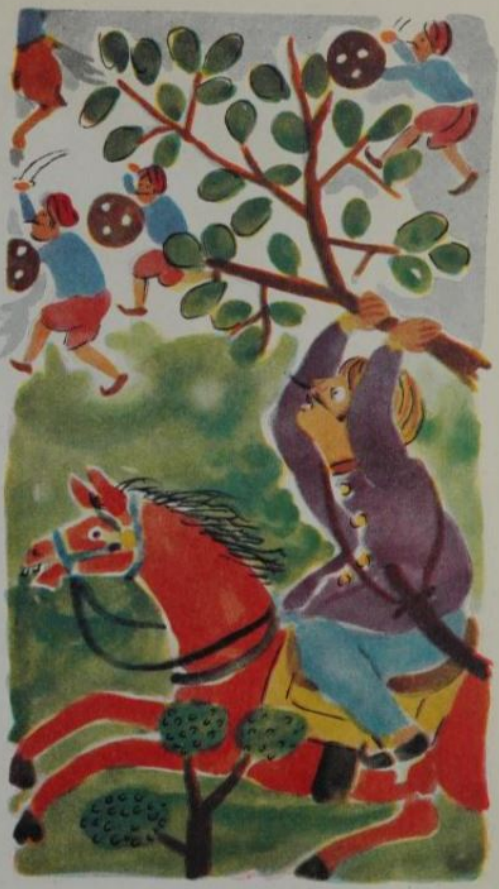
However the Jat was a man of deep commonsense. It happened one day, as both of them were sitting together, that the Miyan started relating a story to the Jat about a man who could read the inner thoughts of everybody. The Jat said it was not a difficult thing as

he could read the innermost wishes of the Miyan. The Miyan said: "Let us bet that you can never succeed in doing this." The Jat said: "Well, the bet has to be quite substantial as it is a difficult job." Miyan being very sure of himself wagered his whole wealth against the fields and the standing crop of the Jat. The Jat readily agreed. The Miyan asked him to study what was his innermost wish. The Jat said that he could not do so there because the Miyan would go back on his word and would not pay the wager. Therefore, both of them decided to go to the king and state the facts and allow the Jat to read the innermost wish of the Miyan in the presence of the king. Accordingly, they went to the durbar of the king and requested him to act as a judge.

The king was like a father to his subjects and he readily agreed. The Jat then made a semblance of reading his neighbour's thoughts, and stated: "Sire, the innermost wish of the Miyan is that very soon a heir be born to the throne." This placed the Miyan in a very awkward situation. If he disputed this fact, he would be treated as a traitor and would be exiled or executed. If he accepted this then he would have to part with the whole of his wealth to the Jat. However, after great consideration he decided to accept the fact and he agreed that that was the innermost thought in his mind and the Jat had won his wager.

The Jat got the whole wealth of the Miyan and this taught him not to cheat people in future. Thus the Miyan became a noble citizen of the town.

The Cheat Outwitted



The Lakhtakia

The Lakhtakia

Once there was a potter who was very poor. He did not do well in his profession. He therefore went to the king and offered him his services. The king enquired how much pay he expected. He said, a lakh of rupees per month, and added: "I will do anything you want." The king agreed to pay it and consequently the potter came to be known as "Lakhtakia".

There were many who became very jealous of the potter. One day they conspired with the king's physician and he prescribed the milk of a lioness for the eyes of the queen. The king said that somebody should go and bring a lioness. Everybody replied that there was "Lakhtakia" who had nothing else to do; he should be given this commission. "Lakhtakia" was therefore given the job.

In the evening when the potter went back to his home he found that one of his donkeys was missing. On the one hand, he was upset at the king's commission as he did not know how to catch a lioness; on the other hand, the donkey was missing. Though it was night he went out in search of the donkey.

It was raining. In a hut with a leaking roof there lived an old

woman who was grumbling about her woes. She was neither afraid of a lion nor anything else, she said, but she very much feared the "tapakala" (drip from the roof of the hut). A lion was standing by the side of the hut and when it heard the old woman's complaint it also became afraid of the "tapakala". The lion thought that "tapakala" was a more ferocious animal than a lion. Meantime the potter searching for his donkey saw something standing by the side of the hut. He imagined it to be his donkey and immediately caught hold of its ear and, dragging it home, bound it to a stake. The lion thought that it had been captured by the "tapakala" and trembled with fear.

Next morning, when the potter got up, he got the shock of his life, seeing a lion tied to the stake in his courtyard. However, he was a clever fellow. He went to the king and reported that he had brought a lion and that the lion wanted somebody to go with it for the milk of the lioness. The physician might be sent to fetch the milk, he suggested. The physician tried many excuses but ultimately was forced to go and thus the potter got his revenge. This incident made him widely respected. Jealousy, however, dies hard.

One day the neighbouring king attacked the king. The king ordered that everybody should get ready to fight. His people suggested that as they now had "Lakhtakia" he should be put in the forefront of the army to fight the enemy. He was asked to select a horse for himself and he went to the stables. There he chose a horse with one leg slightly raised from the ground. The potter thought that, probably, the horse was lame and he would be left at the rear.

Unfortunately for the potter however, the horse was a very spirited one, and, when the potter mounted, it started running towards the enemy's camp. While the horse was running the potter thought that if he reached the enemy's camp he would be killed and that the best thing for him to do was to jump off the horse. Therefore, while passing under a big banyan tree, he caught hold of one of the branches but with the speed of the horse the large branch of the banyan tree broke off in the hands of the potter. The horse ran on with the potter and the branch as well.

When the people in the enemy camp saw that one single man was racing towards them with a big banyan tree which he had broken within their view they all became alarmed. When one man could perform such brave deeds there would be others even better than he, and they would be annihilated. They all ran for their lives.

The king thus won the battle without a fight and was very pleased with the potter. He awarded him fifteen villages. The potter became a nobleman and lived happily ever after.

The Magic Cap

There was once an old man. He had three sons. The two older sons were married. When he was on his death bed he called all the three sons. To the eldest son he gave all his lands and fields. To the second son he gave all his cattle. Then he opened a small box and took out a cap and gave that to his third son. Explaining to his youngest son, he said that the cap had been given to him by a great hermit. It had the property of making the wearer invisible. The old man hoped that with the help of that cap his son would be able to earn his livelihood. After giving various behests to all the three the old man died.

After his death the three sons lived together for some time. The eldest attended to the fields and farming. The second attended to the cattle and brought milk and butter home. As the third son had nothing else to do he would roam about the village enjoying life. His name was Guniram, or Gunia. As he was the youngest, the elder brothers were very fond of him

But the wives became jealous and started taunting him. The eldest one would say that he was eating the grain from her husband's farm. The second wife would say that he was eating the butter from her husband's cattle. Thus life became miserable for Gunia and one fine morning he took the cap and left the house for good.

He walked for five days and five nights and reached a big city. This city was ruled by a just and wise king who had a queen who was very kind and truthful and was like a mother to all her subjects. She was always on the lookout for people troubled and distressed and would help them. There was prosperity all round and everybody was happy.

However, in one corner of the city a sorcerer and a sorceress had built a tall tower in which they lived. On every pitch dark night of the month they would call a durbar and all able-bodied persons in the city had to attend it and do obeisance to the sorcerer. Those who failed to come would be punished by the sorcerer as he always discovered their absence through his magic. The sorceress would pick one among them and sacrifice him to the evil spirits of her magic.

As the black night approached, everybody became anxious, wondering who would be picked up next. This cast an unhappy gloom over all of them. However, because the queen was just and truthful the sorcerer could do nothing to her and she disregarded the behest of the sorcerer and never attended the durbar. The sorcerer

was, therefore, always on the lookout for an occasion when he could do some harm to the queen. Once it happened that he disguised the sorceress as a flower-seller and sent her with beautiful scented flowers to the queen. The queen purchased the flowers and when she smelt them a spell entered her nose and it started growing and grew till it became a foot long. At about this time Gunia reached that city.

As it was evening, and as the tower was at one corner of the city, he rested his back against the wall of the tower and went to sleep and soon started snoring. The sorceress heard the snores and told the sorcerer that she suspected that a man was in the tower. They searched and ultimately the sorceress saw Gunia sitting at the foot of the tower. She put on her wings and swooped down on him to catch him for sacrifice.

The noise however awakened Gunia and when he saw the sorceress swooping down on him he put on the cap and became invisible. The sorceress went blindly on, struck her head against the tower and fell down dizzy. As she fell she swore an oath that the next night, the black night, she would catch Gunia and that if he failed to show up at the durbar he would turn into a donkey.

Next morning Gunia went to the king and narrated the happenings of the previous evening and asked the king for help. The king said he was very sorry but was himself helpless. Gunia requested a private audience with the king and showed him the cap and explained his plot to the king. He also suggested how the nose of the queen could be restored to its original size.

The king accordingly sent word to the sorcerer during the day that the queen would also present herself that night in his durbar and that in view of this the sorcerer might please return the nose of the queen to its normal size and shape. This delighted the sorcerer very much and he threw a spell to restore the nose of the queen to its original shape. When it was night, however, Gunia got into the palanquin of the queen and proceeded to the durbar of the sorcerer with the king. The sorcerer and the sorceress were looking forward eagerly to seeing the queen and to seeing her doing obeisance to them. They were delighted and were drinking heavily.

When the palanquin was placed at the foot of the tower, the sorcerer and the sorceress came down and sat on their thrones. Everybody passed them doing obeisance. Last of all to pass was the king and then it was the turn of the queen to come out of the palanquin. But, lo, instead of the queen, Gunia came out. This so enraged both the sorcerer and the sorceress that they jumped on Gunia to kill him before they took their revenge on the queen. But Gunia was very

quick and at once put on his cap and became invisible. Then he drew his sword and struck the sorcerer in the neck and cut off his head. The sorceress was so furious that she could not remember her spells and before she could regain her wits he killed her too.

Thus the city was rid of the sorcerer and the sorceress. The king and the people were very happy and the king, being very pleased with Gunia, appointed him his Commander-in-Chief. Gunia built a big palace on the outskirts of the city and invited his brothers and their wives to visit him. When they arrived, they were wonderstruck to see Gunia's palace and the wives of both the brothers apologised to him for their past mistakes. All the three brothers lived happily ever after.

Princess Fulamde

In a distant land there ruled once a king who, though handsome and tall, was a weakling. He had a daughter whose name was Princess Fulamde (Flower Princess). Hundreds of princes went to her palace to present their suits but none returned alive. This spread panic and everybody became afraid of marrying her.

In the kingdom adjoining her father's there lived a young Rajput who heard about the beauty of the Princess. He thought he would rather die than live without marrying Fulamde. So he made his preparations and started on his journey to win her.

On the way when he had travelled a hundred kos he saw a sanyasi performing penance. The Rajput dismounted and attached himself to the ascetic. One day the ascetic opened his eyes and when he saw the Rajput he said that he was pleased with the service of

the Rajput and asked what he desired. The young man related his story and begged for help. The sanyasi told him that at a distance of another hundred kos there lived another sanyasi yet more powerful than he who probably might be able to help him.

The Rajput mounted his horse and reached the place of the second Sanyasi the next day. From morning to evening he attended to all the wants of the sanyasi and at night kept watch so that the sanyasi might sleep undisturbed. The sanyasi being pleased bestowed a boon on the young man. The latter related to him his tale with folded hands. The sanyasi said that at the end of another hundred kos he would meet his elder brother who was the most powerful man that ever lived. If anybody could help, he was the man who could do so.

The young man saddled his horse and went to the third sanyasi. The Rajput was ever alert and one day when he found the sanyasi in a happy mood he prostrated himself before him. The sanyasi knew all about Fulamde and he told to the young man that the princess was bewitched by a sorcerer. Anybody entering the palace of the princess had to sound a gong to inform the king of his arrival. As soon as the gong was sounded serpents and scorpions flew through the air and the suitor was at once killed by them.

The sanyasi advised the Rajput to desist from his resolution. The Rajput however fell at his feet and would not rise till the sanyasi blessed him.

The sanyasi being pleased with the young man blessed him and agreed to guide him to success. The young man, he said, should take a finely woven net with him. Before sounding the gong he should fix the net around himself. The scorpions and the serpents would fly into the net and he could kill them.

Accordingly the young Rajput made a fine net of very strong thread. He reached the palace of the princess in the evening. As soon as he arrived he fixed the net around him and sounded the gong. With the sound of the gong the serpents and the scorpions flew at him and got entangled in the net. Meantime the young man killed them all. The king heard the sound of the gong and ran down to see who was there. He found a heap of dead scorpions and serpents and a beautiful young man, alive, unharmed. He was overjoyed and fainted with excess of happiness. When he regained consciousness he called in the royal priest and Princess Fulamde was married to the young Rajput.

After living with his father-in-law for a few days, the young man requested the king to allow him to return to his own country. His

mother was waiting for him and might kill herself in anxiety. The king wanted to send an army with him but the young man refused to take it. He was an ordinary man and it was not possible for him to maintain the army.

The husband and wife took horses next morning and started for home. After travelling some distance, in the evening, they reached a village. In the village, there lived a sorcerer. The sorcerer came to know of everything through his magic. He went to the young man and enumerated the difficulties involved in having the beautiful princess as a wife. Even the king in his country might forcibly take away the princess. The sorcerer suggested that he should leave the princess with him and in return he (the sorcerer) would give the young man a mace which would act at his command. The young man replied: "Alright, you keep the princess and let me have the mace."

The Rajput after acquiring the mace enquired from it who was its master. The mace replied: "You, my lord, are my master." The young man ordered the mace "Beat the sorcerer", and the mace started beating the sorcerer. When the sorcerer had had enough of a beating he requested the young man to withdraw his mace and take

the princess also. The princess came back to the Rajput and both of them started for their country next morning.

When it was evening they reached a village which was the abode of another powerful magician. This one sent for the Rajput and ordered him to leave the princess with him if he wanted to get back unharmed. He however suggested to the Rajput that in return for the princess he would give him a rope. The merit of the rope was that it would bind the largest armies without any other help and the Rajput would thus defeat them and become a king.

The young Rajput pretended to agree to the proposal of the magician and to accept the rope in exchange for the princess. When, however, he got the rope he ordered the rope to tie up the magician and commanded the mace to beat him. The mace started beating the magician till he fainted and forgot even to cast his magic spells. Ultimately the magician requested the Rajput to order the mace back as he was no longer eager to have Fulamde.

The next morning they again saddled their horses and the young man and the princess started for their own village and reached it by the evening. The mother of the Rajput was overjoyed and everybody in the village came to know about his arrival with the princess. The king also heard of it.

The king however ordered his Commander-in-Chief to send a patrol of soldiers to bring the Rajput bound before him. He also instructed that a palanquin be taken and the princess escorted to the palace so that she might be married to a prince befitting her status. Accordingly the Commander-in-Chief went with the soldiers and ordered them to arrest the young Rajput. The young Rajput ordered his mace to beat them. The mace was withdrawn only when the soldiers and the Commander-in-Chief were well-nigh dead with beating.

When the king heard of this, he took his whole army and surrounded the house of the Rajput. The Rajput asked the rope to tie up the whole army and the mace started beating them mercilessly. The soldiers started crying with pain.

Now and then the king also got a blow from the mace. Taking a suitable opportunity the king spurred his horse to escape. The Rajput noticed it and taking to his horse raced up to the king and challenged him to a duel. He was young and dexterous. The king was no match for him and soon fell down from his horse.

The king realised the strength of the Rajput and agreed to share half of his kingdom with him. The young man became a king and lived a long and happy life, ruling justly over his subjects.

Wisdom for Sale

Once there was a very learned and wise Brahmin. Nobody could match his wisdom. Everyone must die some day and he died leaving a son behind. The son of the Brahmin was no less than his father. Finding no other profession, he opened a shop for the sale of wisdom. On the shop he painted in large letters "WISDOM FOR SALE". As the shop was in the midst of the central market, everybody who went to the market passed in front of it.

One day a young son of a rich banker was passing that way. His name was Dhanna. Out of curiosity he entered the shop. He enquired what sort of wisdom was for sale and for how much the Brahmin sold it. The Brahmin said that it depended upon the amount he wanted to spend. Dhanna offered a rupee and enquired what return the wisdom would bring for the rupee. The Brahmin replied that a rupee's worth of wisdom might save a lac of rupees. Dhanna paid a rupee and in return the Brahmin noted down on a piece of paper: "It is unwise to stand and watch two big men fighting."

When Dhanna returned home, he showed this chit to his father. His father, when he read it, lost his temper at his son letting himself be cheated by the Brahmin. He immediately went to the shop of the Brahmin and returned the chit asking for the rupee which his son had paid. The Brahmin was agreeable to paying back the rupee on condition that the boy would never follow the precept given to him. On a promise being given by the sahukar that it would be so, the Brahmin paid back the rupee.

Now the king of the city had two queens. One day all three were passing in front of a jeweller's shop. Both queens happened to notice a bracelet of cute design, and both decided that on returning to the palace they would send their maids to buy it. When they

reached the palace, both sent their maids to the shop of the jeweller. As it happened both maids entered the shop at the same time. The maid of the elder queen said that as she was the maid of the elder queen she had a greater right to buy the bracelet. While the other maid said that as her mistress carried greater favour with the king she had a greater right to buy the bracelet. Thus, both the maids started fighting with each other. Dhanna happened to be there at that time and watched them fighting. When the fight did not settle the dispute, both of them said that they would return to their queens and

complain. While going back, both of them noticed Dhanna sitting there, and they told Dhanna that he would be a witness to what had happened.

The maids went back to their respective queens and reported against each other. Immediately both the queens got enraged and went to the king and they reached the king simultaneously. They told him what had happened and also informed him that Dhanna Sahukar was present and that he might be called to give evidence. The king was obliged to fix the next day for settling the dispute and sent for Dhanna to give evidence.

When Dhanna received word that he was to give evidence, both he and his father were very upset and did not know what they should do. Both of them therefore went to the Brahmin, the seller of wisdom, and begged his pardon. They then entreated him to help them. The Brahmin said that he had no objection to helping them, but the wisdom which he would now bestow would cost them five thousand rupees. The father of Dhanna paid five thousand rupees to the Brahmin for his advice. The Brahmin advised that Dhanna should feign madness when the king called upon him to give evidence and thus he would avoid saying anything against one queen or the other.

The next day, when Dhanna's name was called in the Durbar, he feigned lunacy. The king sent him back and said that nobody could rely on the evidence of a lunatic. In the absence of any evidence, the king advised both the queens to reprimand their maids as it could not be decided who was responsible for the fight. The elder queen did not mind the decision very much but the younger queen took the matter very much to heart and she especially was much enraged against Dhanna and his father. She thought that they had let her down very badly.

When Dhanna's father came to learn of the displeasure of the queen he became concerned for the safety of his family and his business. He went to the Brahmin again for advice in this connection. The Brahmin replied that it would cost him yet another five thousand rupees. On payment of five thousand rupees, the Brahmin advised the banker that he should buy the bracelet and present it to the younger queen. This would not only please the younger queen but it would place him in her good books.

The banker went to the jeweller and purchased the bracelet for one lakh of rupees. Thus the banker underwent an expense of a lakh and ten thousand rupees for refusing to buy wisdom worth only one rupee. Thus the Brahmin made a name and his shop was full of men who wanted to buy wisdom from him. Since that day he lived happily.

Prince Risalu

Prince Risalu

In the city of Sardarsahar there was a king who had a beautiful queen and a prince by the name of Risalu Kunwar. Among all the courtiers of the king there were three who were very much attached to the young prince. One of them was called "Long Leg" and he could walk so fast that even a running horse could not catch up with him. Another, though called "Short Sighted", could see the future like a picture. The third was named "Blind Shooter", but he could shoot an arrow to pierce the pollen of a flower.

It happened that the queen fell seriously ill and died. The prince felt very sad on the death of his mother and, one morning, in company with the three courtiers he set out on a long journey. It was the rainy season and there were floods all round. While he was travelling in the company of "Long Leg", "Short Sighted" and "Blind Shooter" he saw a big rat trying to get out of the water. There was a powerful current and every time the rat tried to get out, it was swallowed up again in the floods. The prince felt sorry for it and with the help of his bow he helped the rat out of water and put it on the earth. When the rat regained its breath, it said, "O prince, I am the king of the rats and you have been helpful to me. I will see to it that every rat wherever it may be helps you."

A little farther downstream the prince saw a big group of ants on a small island and the water was still rising. Another inch of water, and the ants would all have been washed away. So the prince ordered the courtiers to collect leaves and float the leaves on the water. The ants walked on the leaves and crossed to the mainland. The queen of the ants told the Prince, "O prince, you have saved my colony. The ants will always be at your command."

The next day, the prince reached the city of Chandrasahar where there lived a cruel tyrant king who had a beautiful daughter by the name of Chandravati. Princess Chandravati was of marriageable age, but the king, her father, had laid down impossible conditions for her suitors. Only he who could fulfil those conditions could marry Chandravati. Ninety-nine princes had tried to win her but, having failed, they were yoked to grinding stones to grind corn for the horses of the king.

When Risalu Kunwar saw this, he was moved. He immediately made up his mind to win Chandravati and set all the princes free. He proceeded to the king's durbar and announced himself as the Prince of Sardarsahar and a suitor for the hand of Chandravati. The king

saw that Risalu Kunwar was a handsome smart young man. In his heart he felt a sympathy for him. So he told the prince that he should not try to press his suit for the princess. If he did and if he failed, he would be the hundredth man to be yoked to the grinding stones. Risalu Kunwar replied that he was not afraid.

The king set the first task. In a valley of the Himalayas there was a beautiful lake. There were golden lilies in the lake and within one night the prince had to secure one of the lilies and bring it back at the first ray of dawn. When it was dusk he consulted his courtiers as to how to proceed with this task. "Short-sighted" saw with his foresight the exact position of the lake and gave full directions to "Long-Leg" who started on the journey. "Long-Leg" reached the lake before midnight and, after plucking a lily, started back. On the way, however, he was overcome by fatigue and fell sound asleep under a tree. As time was quickly passing, the prince and his two courtiers began to get uneasy. "Short-sighted" focussed his eyes and saw "Long-leg" asleep under the tree. He gave full directions to "Blind-Shooter". "Blind-Shooter" took aim and shot an arrow which passed near the ear of "Long-leg" and woke him up. "Long-leg" got up with a start and ran as fast as he could, reaching the city before it was dawn. The prince presented the lily to the king by the first rays of the dawn.

The next day, the king set the second task. He said that mustard seeds would be spread and mixed with dust in the city and every seed spread must be picked up before dawn. In the evening, Risalu Kunwar called the queen of the ants and asked her to complete the task set by the king. The queen of the ants ordered all the ants to pick up the mustard seeds and the ants picked up all the mustard seeds and took them to their homes under the ground. By morning not a single seed of mustard was left in the city.

The next morning, the young prince presented himself in the king's durbar and reported the completion of the task. The king though amazed did not show it. He set the third ask. He pointed towards a hundred-and-fifty-foot pole in the courtyard and said that before the next day it should be ground to dust. The prince accepted the task and withdrew from the durbar. When it was evening, he sent for the king of the rats and ordered the rats to eat up the pole.

Even before midnight the rats made an end of it. The king was wonderstruck when he got up the next morning and looked out to find no sign of the big pole. However, the prince's troubles were not yet over. At the gate of Princess Chandravati's palace there stood a magician on guard. Anybody on whom he looked with his eyes was

turned to stone. Risalu Kunwar had to pass through that gate to reach the princess.

He called his courtiers and asked for their counsel. It was arranged that "Blind Shooter" would shoot the magician at the first rays of the dawn and then the prince would pass the gate to reach the princess. When it was nearing dawn "Short-sighted" saw the exact position of the magician and gave instructions to "Blind Shooter". He in turn shot two arrows which pierced both the eyes of the magician and he fell dead. Immediately Risalu Kunwar mounted his horse and entered through the gate. Inside there was a gong which he sounded to inform the king and the princess that he had arrived.

As there was no way out, the king was forced to agree to the marriage. All the princes imprisoned to grind corn were set free. Risalu Kunwar returned to Sardarsahar with the princess as his wife and both lived and reigned for many years till, as ordained, they departed to the other world.

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FOLK TALES FROM RAJASTHAN

There is a perennial charm in the folk tales and fairy tales of the world. It is not only children that the tales have entertained and put to bed.

Of course, there are basic conditions which govern these tales, the most important of which is that only impossible things should happen in them. Why not? Since the tales belong to the world of imagination everything impossible is possible in them; realism would just make them dull. Another governing postulate is that the main characters of the tale always "live happily ever after".

In the tales from the world of fancy-free presented here, to mention a few: the fool gets what he lacks — wisdom (The Wise Banjari); sons their lost patrimony (The Clever Brothers); the simpleton everything for nothing (Take a Trip to Delhi); the bankrupt hero the king's daughter (The Adventurous Rajput); and even the clever thief is not forgotten; he gets State honours as the master of his disreputable craft (The Thief and the King); . . . and everybody lives happily ever after!

Profusely illustrated in colour.